



Community
Options, Inc.

Meaningful Day

Day Program Services Curriculum & Staff Guidebook



Robert Stack and AnaMaria Herrera

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PREFACE

Meaningful Day is the result of a nascent programmatic vision for persons with significant disabilities who are not part of the supported employment paradigm. Community Options staff pulled this together to enhance the quality of day services offered to individuals with disabilities with long term optimistic goals for community jobs.

We recognized that there were limited resources available to guide managers on meaningful and dynamic activities. The quality of the service was dependent on the creativity and commitment of the individual managing the program.

Feedback was solicited from well-trained and highly educated staff, family members and individuals receiving service. The culmination of this information was the development of a well-rounded and comprehensive guide that can be easily replicated and modified to meet the specific needs of individuals in any day program.

Meaningful Day was written by staff at Community Options who train and work daily with people with significant intellectual disabilities, autism and traumatic brain injuries. We are confident the application of the ideas and methodologies provided in this guide will make a significant improvement in the quality of your program, the engagement of your staff and the overall satisfaction of individuals attending a truly meaningful day program.

About the Agency:

Community Options is a nationally based nonprofit with the mission of developing housing and employment for persons with disabilities.

About Robert Stack:

Robert Stack is the Founder, President and Chief Executive Officer of Community Options. He has an M.B.A. and is a graduate of the University of Dayton. Robert has extensive international experience in entrepreneurial business development and non-profit management.

About AnaMaria Herrera:

AnaMaria Herrera is the National Training Specialist at Community Options. She has an M.S. in Human Resource Development with a concentration in Instructional Design and e-Learning from Drexel University. AnaMaria is an expert in training and development, curriculum design, and leadership development.

INTRODUCTION

Objective

Provide day programs with a curriculum and facilitation guide that will help support the staff in creating meaningful activities and engaging learning opportunities for individuals with disabilities, whom we serve.

Goals

- Provide the individuals we serve with opportunities to actively participate in and integrate into their community;
- Provide the individuals we serve with learning opportunities;
- Guide and encourage the individuals we serve to advocate for themselves; and
- Support the individuals we serve in becoming more self-sufficient.

Solution

Develop a day program curriculum that provides a thematic overview, desired outcomes, and suggested training/facilitation ideas for the program staff.

Training Outline

The *Meaningful Day: Day Program Curriculum and Staff Guidebook* provides the program staff with a thoughtful curriculum, desired outcomes, and suggested training ideas for working with the individuals we serve. Please note that we recognize that staff-to-individual ratios, time frames for day programs, and functionality of the individuals may prove difficult in implementing the entire curriculum. Regardless, in order to provide the individuals we serve with a meaningful learning experience each day, we encourage you to use your best judgment in managing the themed units, daily activities, and learning flow, which should always be intended to engage the individuals' participation throughout their day program experience. Instead of saying, "This is not possible," ask yourselves, "How can we make it possible?" Remember, this curriculum and guide should encourage creativity and flexibility, as well as provide opportunities to make choices within the existing program structure.

The curriculum is broken down by themed units, which will focus on key themes and subtopics and include suggested teaching/training ideas, learning opportunities, and/or activities within the 5-day time frame for each unit.

- Each day of the unit will include identified desired outcomes, a range of suggested activities suitable for the development levels of the individuals we serve, and the average staff/group ratio of 1:8.
- The provided time frames are broad in order to recognize the functionality of the individuals we serve and the time frames that day service programs have each day. Not every desired outcome may be met, but the curriculum is a starting point for providing better services and greater options to the individuals we serve.
- The suggested training ideas are meant to be just that—suggestions. Feel free to choose the training ideas that would work best for your particular program and the individuals you serve.
- Spend extra time on topics and desired learning outcomes that reinforce an individual's support plan (ISP) and the goals identified therein. The curriculum provided should be linked to an individual's goals and objectives, which will assist him or her in developing a structured routine.

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Unit 6: Volunteerism

Goal: Provide the individuals we serve with an opportunity to learn about the different volunteering opportunities in their region. By doing so, we are helping to support their learning and development in becoming active members in their community, more self-sufficient, and comfortable interacting and communicating with their community at large.

Desired Outcomes:

- Learn what volunteer opportunities exist in their area.
- Learn how to sign up for volunteer opportunities.
- Actively engage with community members through a volunteer project.
- Attend/support volunteer-oriented events.
- Attain a volunteer position.

	Daily Activities	Time Frame	Materials (Suggested)	Training & Facilitation Guide
Day 1	Understanding volunteering	1-6 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Computer(s)	See page 38
Day 2	Picking a volunteer opportunity	1-6 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Computer(s)• Phonebook directory• Maps	See page 39
Day 3	Attending a volunteer-supported event	1-6 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Computer(s)• Phonebook directory• Maps	See page 40
Day 4	Volunteering in the community	1-6 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Computer(s)• Phonebook directory• Maps	See page 41
Day 5	Identifying your volunteer interests	1-6 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Computer(s)• Pictures of things they like to do• Maps	See page 42

Volunteerism Unit: Day 1

Day 1 Topic: Understanding volunteering

Desired Outcomes:

- Teach the individuals what skills they can attain through volunteering at local organizations.
- Discuss the community relationships and friendships the individuals can make through volunteering.

Suggested Training & Facilitation Ideas:

- Using a computer, search for and view a video on why volunteering is important.
- Share the new experiences and insights individuals can gain with volunteer work, such as:
 - Meeting new people daily at the volunteer site,
 - Building relationships with coworkers, and
 - Developing social and professional skills.
- Have peers who volunteer share their reasons for volunteering and what they like about it.
- Share how giving back and helping others in need makes everyone grow and feel a sense of accomplishment.
- Have the individuals make a collage of the different types of places they can volunteer at and what kind of volunteering they can do.

Volunteerism Unit: Day 2

Day 2 Topic: Picking a volunteer opportunity

Desired Outcomes:

- Educate the individuals on a variety of local organizations at which they can volunteer.
- Provide the individuals with an opportunity to pick a local organization that fits their interests and desires.

Suggested Training & Facilitation Ideas:

- Using the computer, have the individuals search for local volunteer sites.
- Identify what types of volunteer sites individuals would like to visit.
 - Have brochures of possible volunteer sites available for this activity.
 - Have the individuals share what types of activities they enjoy doing.
 - Have them compare what they like about the different brochures to gauge whether they want to volunteer at one of the sites.
 - Have the group identify two or three agencies they would like to visit.
- Discuss what to expect at a volunteer site.
 - Have the individuals share what appropriate social skills they should display at the volunteer sites.
 - Have them share what to wear and what not to wear when volunteering.

Volunteerism Unit: Day 3

Day 3 Topic: Attending a volunteer-supported event

Desired Outcomes:

- Provide the individuals with an opportunity to see the impact of volunteerism.
- Provide the individuals with an opportunity to learn the many different roles and skills they can learn from volunteering.

Suggested Training & Facilitation Ideas:

- Discuss how volunteers play an important role in the community.
 - Show a video on how volunteers impact volunteer-supported events.
 - Identify local events that use volunteers (e.g., the annual Cupid's Chase Run, food donation drives, and winter clothing drives).
 - Identify various volunteer activities individuals can do at a volunteer-supported event.
 - Identify how they can sign up for volunteer-supported events.
- Schedule a field trip to a local volunteer-supported event and have the site manager explain:
 - The role of the volunteers,
 - The skills they can gain at the volunteer site, and
 - How volunteer work at an event can positively affect the community.